

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-25 are pending in the above-identified application. Claims 2, 8, and 12 are amended. Claims 14-16 are cancelled. It is respectfully submitted that this Amendment is fully responsive to the Office Action dated December 14, 2005.

Claims 14-16 were objected to under 37 C.F.R. §1.75(c), as being of improper dependent form for failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim. To expedite prosecution, Applicants cancel claims 14-16. Accordingly, this objection is now moot.

Claims 2-7, 12-14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicants' admitted prior art (hereinafter "APA") in view of *Tonegawa et al.* (USPAPN 2003/0155657 A1, hereinafter "*Tonegawa*").

To expedite prosecution and clarify the claimed invention, Applicants amend claims 2, 8 and 12 to specify, for example, that the plasma processing is performed with the interconnection being covered with the Sic barrier film, and that the barrier film is etched after the plasma processing.

Applicants respectfully submit that, unlike the claimed invention, the plasma treatment disclosed in the *Tonegawa* reference is performed after the wiring 6 is exposed by removing the etching stopper film 7. In other words, a plasma treatment has not been performed to the interlayer insulation films 8 and 10 when the etching stopper film 7 is removed.

Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. §1.116  
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Furthermore, *Tonegawa* suffers the same problem as that of the prior art in the present specification (e.g., side surfaces of the films 8 and 10 should retreat when the etching stopper film 7 is removed in the *Tonegawa* reference.)

Thus, in view of these amendments and accompanying remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejections of these claims.

Claims 8-11, 15, 18, 21, and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over APA in view of *Tonegawa*, as applied above, and further in view of *Ryuzaki et al.* (USPN 6,777,325, hereinafter "*Ryuzaki*"). However, in view of the remarks above, these claims should be allowable by nature of dependency. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner allow these claims.

For at least the foregoing reasons, the claimed invention distinguishes over the cited art and defines patentable subject matter. Favorable reconsideration is earnestly solicited.


Should the Examiner deem that any further action by applicant would be desirable to place the application in condition for allowance; the Examiner is encouraged to telephone applicant's undersigned attorney.

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If this paper is not timely filed, Applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

**WESTERMAN, HATTORI, DANIELS & ADRIAN, LLP**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darrin A. Auito', written in a cursive style.

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